

NORTH CAROLINA STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICE
Office of Archives and History
Department of Cultural Resources

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES

Roberson-Everett-Roebuck House

Robersonville, Martin County, MT0014, Listed 8/30/2010
Nomination by Drucilla York
Photographs by Drucilla York, April 2008



Façade view



Rear view

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. **Place additional certification comments, entries, and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a).**

1. Name of Property

Historic name Roberson-Everett-Roebeck House

Other names/site number _____

2. Location

street & number 105 South Outterbridge Street

N/A not for publication

city of town Robersonville

N/A vicinity

State North Carolina

code NC

county Martin

code 117

zip code 27871

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,

I hereby certify that this ☒ nomination _____ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

In my opinion, the property ☒ meets _____ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

☐ national

☐ statewide

☒ local

Signature of certifying official

Date

State Historic Preservation Officer
Title

North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property ☐ meets _____ does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of commenting official

Date

Title

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

☐ entered in the National Register

☐ determined eligible for the National Register

☐ determined not eligible for the National Register

☐ removed from the National Register

☐ other (explain:)

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5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply)

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	private
<input type="checkbox"/>	public - Local
<input type="checkbox"/>	public - State
<input type="checkbox"/>	public - Federal

Category of Property

(Check only **one** box)

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	building(s)
<input type="checkbox"/>	district
<input type="checkbox"/>	site
<input type="checkbox"/>	structure
<input type="checkbox"/>	object

Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
2	1	buildings
0	0	sites
0	0	structures
0	0	Objects
2	1	Total

Name of related multiple property listing

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

N/A

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC/single dwelling

DOMESTIC/secondary structure

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

VACANT/NOT IN USE

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

LATE VICTORIAN/Queen Anne

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation: BRICK

walls: WOOD/ weatherboard

roof: ASPHALT

other:

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Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance of the property. Explain contributing and noncontributing resources if necessary. Begin with **a summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, setting, size, and significant features.)

Summary Paragraph

See attached.

Narrative Description

See attached.

8. Statement of Significance**Applicable National Register Criteria**

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing)

- ☐ A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- ☐ B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- ☒ C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- ☐ D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply)

Property is:

- ☐ A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- ☐ B removed from its original location.
- ☐ C a birthplace or grave.
- ☐ D a cemetery.
- ☐ E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- ☐ F a commemorative property.
- ☐ G less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

Architecture

Period of Significance

ca. 1900

Significant Dates

ca. 1900

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

unknown

Period of Significance (justification)

See statement of significance summary.

Criteria Considerations (explanation, if necessary)

N/A

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Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph (provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance and applicable criteria)

See attached.

Narrative Statement of Significance (provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance)

See attached.

Developmental history/additional historic context information (if appropriate)

See attached.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets) [see continuation sheet]

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

☐ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67 has been requested)
☐ previously listed in the National Register
☐ previously determined eligible by the National Register
☐ designated a National Historic Landmark
☐ recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
☐ recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

Primary location of additional data:

☒ State Historic Preservation Office
☐ Other State agency
☐ Federal agency
☐ Local government
☐ University
☐ Other
Name of repository: _____

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): _____

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10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 1.41 acres
(Do not include previously listed resource acreage)

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

1 18 296080 3966420
Zone Easting Northing

3 Zone Easting Northing

2 Zone Easting Northing

4 Zone Easting Northing

Verbal Boundary Description (describe the boundaries of the property)

The boundary that encompasses the Roberson-Everett-Roebuck House property includes the acreage described in Martin County Deed Books U-5/300 and T-12/941 and listed as Martin County Tax parcels #0700032 (1.06 acres) and #0700027 (0.35 acres) and is shown by a dark line on the attached tax map at a scale of 1"=243'.

Boundary Justification (explain why the boundaries were selected)

The boundary described above encompasses land historically associated with the Roberson-Everett-Roebuck House and its ancillary buildings.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Drucilla H. York, Architectural Historian

organization Local History Associates

date May 10, 2010

street & number 2001 East Fifth Street

telephone 252-752-5260

city or town Greenville

state NC

zip code 27858

e-mail druyork@embarqmail.com

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- Maps:** A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- Continuation Sheets**
- Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Photographs:

Submit clear and descriptive black and white photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map.

Name of Property: Roberson-Everett-Roebuck House

City or Vicinity: Robersonville

County: Martin **State:** North Carolina

Photographer: Drucilla H. York

Date Photographed: Photos 1-4 & 9-11; April 2008, Photos 6-8, August 2008; Photo 12, May 2010

Description of Photograph(s) and number: 1 of 12

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1. Front façade: southwest view
2. Southeast side elevation: northwest view
3. Oblique view rear: east view
4. Front façade detail of porch, front entrance, and tower: southwest view
5. Entrance front facade
6. Hall interior with detail of stair, entrance, and parlor doorway
7. Parlor interior with window and paneled apron plus detail of mantel
8. Front bedroom mantel

James A. Roebuck Jr. House (1947) and wood/smokehouse (ca. 1900) outbuilding

9. Southwest view from driveway toward James A. Roebuck Jr. House and wood/smokehouse outbuilding
10. Roberson-Everett-Roebuck House and wood/smokehouse: east view
11. James A. Roebuck Jr. House front facade: southeast view
12. James A. Roebuck Jr. House interior: hall and bath

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, PO Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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7. DESCRIPTION:

Summary

The Roberson-Everett-Roebuck House, built ca. 1900, is a one-and-a-half-story, highly decorated, Queen Anne-style frame cottage featuring a steeply pitched hipped roof with central tower, lower cross gables, front porch, and a double-pile center-hall plan. Sawn and turned woodwork includes exterior gable ornaments, bracketed cornices, and the front porch balustrade and spindle frieze. Plain weatherboards protect the exterior walls except for that sheltered by the front porch, which is sheathed in a herringbone pattern of beaded boards. The original wooden-shake roof has an asphalt-shingle overlay, and most windows have louvered shutters. Both the foundation and chimneys are brick. The interior of the house remains remarkably intact and exhibits robust late Victorian woodwork and hardware.

Located at 105 Outterbridge Street just a half block south of the former Atlantic Coast Line Railroad tracks, the house is situated in a turn-of-the-century residential neighborhood of Robersonville. The lot is large and deep, with the house facing the street to the northeast. Mature oaks shade the dwelling, and to the southeast of the house, a straight driveway leads to two frame ancillary buildings: a contemporary frame combination wood and smokehouse plus a modest one-story, gable-front frame dwelling built in 1947. A vegetable garden once occupied a portion of the rear lot. In good condition, the house maintains a high degree of integrity with respect to location, design, setting, materials, feeling, and workmanship, having experienced few modifications through the years. In the late 1950s a porte cochère that replicates decorative and design features of the original front porch was added to the northwest side of the dwelling. This remodeling also included enclosing the breezeway porch connection between the house and the two-room kitchen/dining room to the rear.

Setting:

The overall character, physical identity, and integrity of the Roberson-Everett-Roebuck site conveys, embodies, and exudes its period of significance. Built on property that in 1900 encompassed two lots near a curve in Outterbridge Street, the house is set back approximately fifteen feet from a cement sidewalk that extends along the west side of the street. A grass buffer interspersed with crepe myrtles separates the sidewalk from the curb. The dwelling occupies the northeast quadrant of the property. A cement walk extends from the curb straight toward the house, then flares wider to the full width of the three cement steps with brick ends that lead up to the front porch. An unpaved straight drive parallels its southeast elevation and leads to a

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combination wood and smoke house. A modest gable-front frame bungalow built in 1947 stands just south of this drive and faces it as well as the entrance to the kitchen. Majestic white, water, and chestnut oak trees shade and shelter this complex of buildings to the south and rear. Beds containing flowering shrubs typical of this region, namely azaleas and camellias, as well as American boxwood, serve as foundation plantings along the front of each dwelling and are intermittently used elsewhere. Fragrant gardenias are strategically located near each end of the porch along the southeast elevation of the house. A tall cedar stands near the property line, midway along the north elevation. Wisteria grows freely beside the porte cochère and behind the combination wood and smokehouse. The back portion of the lot is open and includes a garden area. Outlining the walk along the street and driveway southeast of the house, a decorative picket fence once enclosed this area of front and side yard. It was removed ca. 1950. Formerly a wash house stood near the rear of the house and a stable near the back of the lot at the south side.

Roberson-Everett-Roebuck House, ca. 1900, Contributing building

Exterior:

Located in the small town of Robersonville, the Roberson-Everett-Roebuck House is an excellent example of a Queen Anne-style cottage and is documented as the most outstanding example in Martin County. This one-and-a-half-story frame dwelling featuring fanciful turned and sawn woodwork detailing has a steeply pitched roof with a central polygonal tower, a full façade front porch, cross-gables, and a now attached rear ell flanked by porches. Originally this ell was a two-room kitchen and dining room connected to the dwelling by an open breezeway. Most of the original brick pier foundation is now enclosed with brick. The walls and cross-gables are sheathed with weatherboard except for the herringbone-patterned beaded boards that cover the walls of the front façade sheltered beneath the hip-roof of its porch. Supported by substantial turned posts with foliate brackets, the front porch has a hip-roof central projection that accentuates the front entrance. Other porch details include a railing with turned balusters and a spindle frieze with delicate drop pendant accents. Deep cornices with returns skirt the roof. Along the front and side elevations, repetitive sawnwork scroll brackets accent the cornices. Each cross gable contains a delicate gable ornament with a semicircular fan highlighted with spindles and drop pendants. Although varying in size, all windows are double-hung sash with six-over-six lights and most have replacement louvred shutters. An asphalt-shingle overlay obscures the original wooden-shake roof. The exterior massing and fenestration of the house reflects its double-pile center-hall floor plan. Two interior brick chimneys featuring double-banded stacks with recessed panels beneath each corbelled cap, serve a fireplace in each principal room.

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The asymmetrical design of the front (northeast) elevation of the house also features a central octagonal tower and a central entrance with flanking bays. These bays with splayed sides vary in depth and contain three tall double-hung sash windows with louvred shutters. Each window has an apron featuring two panels with diagonally placed beaded boards, as well as flanking panels. These panels compliment the herringbone-pattern of the porch façade's beaded-board sheathing. The central entrance is framed by a simple surround in addition to a three-light transom and flanking sidelights above a raised panel. Its door, like many of the period, features a lower section exhibiting six rectangular panels with robust moldings and an upper half containing a single large pane surrounded by alternating small, square and elongated panes. All, including the transom, contain patterned translucent glass. The main hip roof is pierced directly above the entrance by an octagonal tower featuring vertical flush sheathing and a matching octagonal bellcast roof with a spike finial. A bracketed cornice skirts the tower roof, and a small double-hung sash window provides a central focal point. Louvered shutters protect this window. Its upper sash is flanked by single fixed sash featuring colored glass that forms a radiating diamond design.

The side elevations of the dwelling are similar in detail. Each has a gable projection that mirrors the other. They include corner posts with quarter-round edges and simple cyma recta caps. All windows have plain surrounds and sills. Each lintel, however, has a handsome cyma recta cap molding. A porte cochère with low hip roof was added to the northwest elevation in the late 1950s. Set back from the front porch, it replicates several decorative sawnwork features of the front porch, such as turned posts with paired foliate brackets and a cornice with scroll brackets. An open lattice screen encloses the side of the porte cochère. Here its turned posts stand on a running brick foundation.

Porches flank both side elevations along the rear ell and each bears evidence of important aspects of everyday family living in the early twentieth century. Both exhibit multiple pairs of hammock hooks and swing eyes. The southeast side elevation includes an expansive open porch known as "the boys'" porch, which was used especially on rainy days. Steps lead up to it at the east end and in front of the kitchen door at the southwest end. Here a lattice screen at the open end of the porch filters afternoon sunlight. Turned posts support the porch's shed roof and feature a balustrade with turned balusters and paired cutwork brackets displaying concentric quarter-rounds with plain, scallop, and sawtooth edges.

The opposing northwest elevation includes the "girls'" porch, which is sheltered by an engaged roof. Today this porch is screened in and includes a rare stilted frame dairy appended to its west corner. A shed roof extension supported by tall posts shades the dairy and a range of exterior

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wooden steps. Each of these porch roofs is supported by posts that are square in section and have chamfered edges with splayed ends. The four wooden steps measure approximately fifteen feet long and extend from the side of the dairy to the present-day rear of the house. These steps were once used for play and family pictures. Although the fenestration pattern of this ell is slightly altered, the doors and windows are original. At one time, a kitchen window may have existed directly across from the dairy. Typically, these door and window surrounds are plain and each door exhibits four low-profile raised panels.

The dairy has a shed roof and its exterior and interior are sheathed with vertical beaded boards. A similar door is centrally located on the front elevation and contains a cutout screened opening. A board shelf skirts the interior. The building measures approximately three feet and eight inches deep with a width of approximately five feet. From the porch floor, it stands just over six feet tall.

Interior

Little changed, the floor plan for the Robeson-Everett-Roebuck House conforms to a basic double-pile, center-hall plan exhibiting typical Victorian irregularity in room shape and size. By design, a person entering the front door is actively directed into the formal parlor to the left. A balustrade positioned at the foot of the stair limits easy access to the hall and stair. A sitting room is located directly behind the parlor. To the right of the front entrance, the hall opens into two back-to-back bedrooms. All walls are plastered and have tall baseboards with robust molded caps. The floors throughout are pine measuring four-and-a-half inches wide with a running board length of up to fourteen feet. The straight stair in the hall extends from front to back, beginning with a single step landing that opens into the passageway. An enclosed stringer with heavily molded flat panels along with a balustrade featuring turned balusters, rounded handrail, and robust turned newels define this stair.

Examples of handsome late-Victorian millwork are found throughout the dwelling, many of which mirror each other as a whole or in detail. All window and door surrounds match and feature mitred corners and a plain surface, except for a heavily molded backband and stop with rounded end. Each window surround in the principal rooms downstairs extends to the floor and includes an apron with an elongated horizontal flat panel. Original metal Victorian window locks secure all windows. Each interior door contains four low-profile panels. Corner fireplaces serve the parlor and each first-floor bedroom. The mantels in the parlor and front bedroom are highly stylized examples featuring paired turned posts with bracket headers supporting a shelf with reeded edge. The frieze band of the parlor mantel is composed of a row of attached spindles; however, the one in the bedroom alternates between a plain bull's eye and diminutive paired

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posts. Other mantels exhibit simplified pilaster, frieze, and shelf combinations that feature reeding and bull's eye details.

The upstairs floor plan originally included a central hall, three rooms, and a trunk room. On the south side, the two small connecting rooms now are one. An eave storage area is accessed through a door at the rear (west) of this room. In the hall, the stair balustrade encloses the stairwell and a bay sitting area is created by the tower, with light provided by its windows. Also, the original beaded-board ceilings are exposed in the hall and trunk room. All doors exhibit original hardware including porcelain and metal knobs. Each room is distinguished by tall plain baseboards with a robust bead, doors with plain board surrounds, and window surrounds that replicate ones elsewhere, minus the paneled apron. Upon entering the trunk room on the north side of the hall, four tiers of shelving line its opposing side walls.

At the rear of the main house, the once separate two-room, kitchen and dining room stands with little change in spatial design. An interior chimney is present along the partition wall of the dining room, which served as the flue for the kitchen's cooking stove and possibly a heat stove in the dining room. A door, formerly an exterior one, opens into the dining room from the north corner of its side elevation and another interior one opens into the kitchen to the left (south) of the chimney flue. Reflecting a late 1950s remodeling, the kitchen features knotty pine paneling. A local carpenter, James Jenkins, completed all of the remodeling work undertaken in the late 1950s, including the breezeway, porte cochère, and kitchen.

The integrity of the interior's original design was minimally affected by the enclosure of the former connecting breezeway and the addition of late 1950s elements and features. For privacy and heat control, a French door was added that bisects the front and back halls. The breezeway was adapted into a bathroom off the sitting room and an office paneled with knotty pine featuring a built-in desk with shelves. Also, another bathroom and a laundry room were inconspicuously added to the downstairs off the rear bedroom. Throughout the first floor, ceilings have applied Celotex tiles, as do the upstairs bedrooms. Chair rails also were installed in both the hall and dining room. Changes to the parlor fireplace included a new fire brick lining and raised hearth.

Wood and smokehouse, ca. 1900, Contributing building.

A strong family tradition maintains that this one-story gable-roof frame building with two rooms was used as a combination wood house and smokehouse. Plain weatherboards sheath much of the exterior and standing-seam tin protects the roof. On the northeast elevation facing the house, two uses are implied by a paired entrance with two distinctly different doors. The more utilitarian

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one has a vertical board exterior and opens into a large unfinished area with a dirt floor. Just inside, an open stair rises along the partition wall to a loft area. In contrast, the other door is a standard finished one with four low-profile raised panels. It opens into a narrow finished room with tongue-and-groove flooring and walls and ceiling sheathed with beaded boards. The northwest and southwest elevations are both blind and sheathed with plain weatherboards and flush sheathing, respectively. The southeast elevation, however, may have originally had an open bay. Plain weatherboards sheath much of the gable end; however, German siding sheaths the remainder. A door with vertical sheathing is a later addition.

James Albert Roebuck Jr. House, 1947, Noncontributing building, builder James C. Gurkin

Constructed in 1947 for James Albert Roebuck Jr. after his marriage to Doris Johnson Everett, this modest gable-front one-story frame dwelling is located on the opposite side of the drive from the rear of the main house and perpendicular to it facing northwest toward the kitchen. It measures approximately twenty-six feet by thirty feet. The house is sheathed with plain weatherboard and sits on a brick foundation. Situated to the left (east), the front entrance combines with two windows to form an asymmetrical, three-bay façade. A short walk leads up to this entrance, which features a diminutive front stoop and a door with nine lights over two vertical panels. A gable-front hood shelters the entrance and mimics details of the main asphalt-shingled roof, such as its exposed rafter tails and roof pitch. All windows have plain board surrounds, double-hung sash with six-over-six lights, and fixed shutters made of two vertical boards and exposed battens. Facing the street, the house's side elevation (northeast) exhibits two pairs of windows with flanking shutters. The opposing side elevation simply has two bays, a window and kitchen door, both sheltered by metal awnings. Rectangular air vents with louvers used to promote air circulation are located in each gable end. Two brick interior chimneys rise from the west roof slope near its ridge. The interior follows a double-pile configuration opening into a living room, which leads into a front bedroom and an interior rear hall. This small hall also links a second bedroom, bathroom, and kitchen. The kitchen has built-in wooden cabinets and the bathroom has a tile wainscot and porcelain fixtures. All interior finishes are simple and most are original, including handsome door hardware with glass knobs. James A. Roebuck Jr. worked for fifty years at Dixie Motor Company in Williamston. In 1962, he moved his family to a larger new brick dwelling on the opposite side of the Roberson-Everett-Roebuck House.¹

¹ "James A. Roebuck," *The Enterprise*, September 3, 2002, 2.

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8. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Summary

Architecturally, the Robeson-Everett-Roebuck House is documented as the most outstanding intact Queen Anne-style cottage in Martin County and for this reason meets Criterion C for architectural significance as an excellent local example of the style.² This picturesque dwelling, with steeply pitched hip roof, front porch, central tower, cross gable, and rear ell, features bracketed cornices, balustrades, posts, and gable ornaments, all with fancy turned and sawn woodwork details. Its construction ca. 1900 and ownership illustrate familial dedication and civic commitment commonly associated with the economic development of eastern North Carolina towns around the turn of the twentieth century. The Town of Robersonville was officially incorporated in 1870, an act that was supported by its four principal landowners, Staton Everett and three brothers, William W., George O. and Henry D. Roberson. Both families were historically associated with the agricultural economy of the region throughout the nineteenth century, and each, following the Civil War, branched into developing commercial and urban investments, which included modernizations in transportation and education. Having gifted the town with its name, members of the Roberson family played key roles in stimulating community and civic growth, serving as town commissioners, merchants, investors, craftsmen, and mill operators. Historically, the Robeson-Everett-Roebuck House embodies this transitional growth through its association with Archibald Staton Roberson (1866-1955) and his community investments; John D. Everett (1869-1953) as the first superintendant of schools for the newly created Robersonville public school system in 1905; and James Albert Roebuck Sr. (1859-1922), who placed his trust in an improved quality of urban life that moving from a nearby farm to Robersonville ca. 1913 afforded his family through the first half of the twentieth century. The period of significance is ca. 1900, the approximate construction date of the Queen Anne-style house.

Historical Background

Following Reconstruction, new towns in eastern North Carolina materialized through the foresight and efforts of area landowning families, who recognized economic opportunities and worked diligently, investing time and resources in the development of a community's future. Over time, catalysts for town growth were the production of cash crops, transportation improvements, and educational institutions. Farmers and laborers alike moved from rural to developing commercial areas. In the southwestern region of Martin County, the progressive drive of the Roberson family embodied these trends. Most were landowners and farmers, some of

² Butchko, *Martin Architectural Heritage*, 70.

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whom augmented their incomes as carpenters or operators of grist and saw mills. Other family members sought to establish a “trading center and market for western Martin County.”³

Incorporated on February 16, 1870, Robersonville developed initially as a small town dependent principally on the area’s agricultural economy and the commercial activities of its landowners and founders, Staton Everett and three Roberson brothers, Henry Daniel (b. 1824), William Wynn (b. 1819), and George Outlaw (1821-1887). By 1874, the town had 104 residents and it included a masonic lodge and post office. Many of the businesses were owned and operated in 1877 by members of the Roberson family, including three of its four mercantile establishments along with a distillery, wine press, and blacksmith shop.⁴ By 1880, the town’s population totaled 148 people within twenty-eight households, ten of which were Robersons. Farmers headed up eleven of these households. Most adults, however, were either laborers (twenty-six) or housekeepers (twenty-seven). Six servants and six store clerks enabled the operation of households and businesses, respectively. The town also included one teacher, two mechanics, and a doctor, R. H. Hargrove. Seventy percent of the town’s population was white.⁵

The completion of the Albemarle and Raleigh Railroad line to Robersonville in October 1882 created a development opportunity for the town. This eastward expanding corridor now linked the town with Bethel, Tarboro, and the main line of the Wilmington and Weldon Railroad near Rocky Mount, providing reliable transportation and a direct market connection. Its continued development soon joined the town with Williamston, the county seat for Martin County. As a contractor and stockholder of the railroad, Henry D. Roberson, who served in the North Carolina General Assembly, actively promoted development of this line. As the town grew, new streets, businesses, and residences were aligned with the railroad tracks, which eventually bisected the growing town and linked its old commercial crossroads with its new developing downtown to the east.⁶

During the late nineteenth century, flue cured tobacco rapidly became the “king” cash crop in eastern North Carolina. Not only was tobacco a more dependable crop than cotton or corn, but it also was ready for market sooner. Its sales spurred the development of local tobacco markets, and access to rail transportation was a critical economic catalyst for emerging tobacco towns. The advent of this economic boom in Robersonville was the formation in December 1899 of the Robersonville Tobacco Warehouse Company, which was followed by the opening on August 7,

³ Butchko, *Martin Architectural Heritage*, 303.

⁴ Butchko, *Martin Architectural Heritage*, 303.

⁵ 1880 U. S. Census, Martin County, N. C., Robersonville, Population Schedule.

⁶ Butchko, *Martin Architectural Heritage*, 303.

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1900 of the first tobacco market in Martin County at Robersonville with the Carolina Warehouse as its sales center.⁷ Although Williamston followed suit, Robersonville's annual tobacco market openings and sales encouraged ample competitive economic stimulus for the town throughout the first half of the twentieth century.

In 1900, Robersonville's population had increased to 275 residents, and its development remained rooted in the region's agricultural economy. General stores predominated but the town now reflected a more diverse economy that included a grocery, drug store, millinery shop, jewelry store, cotton gin, hotel, corn/saw mill, and a carriage manufacturer.⁸ Dressmaking, telegraph, and bicycle services were now readily available. Tradesmen living in the community included a blacksmith, painter, brick mason, steam miller, two wood workers, and five carpenters. Members of the Roberson family remained ensconced in several dry goods businesses and farming; however, others were a teacher, jeweler, brick mason, steam miller, and day laborer.⁹

Considered one of the most rapidly growing towns in eastern North Carolina during the early twentieth century, Robersonville had embraced by 1905 its motto of "unity and progress."¹⁰ Following a destructive fire early in 1901, the town quickly adopted an ordinance to require that all buildings on Main Street be constructed of brick.¹¹ The telephone company had also begun running lines that spring to Robersonville and its neighboring towns. As tobacco sales increased, investors rapidly built additional tobacco warehouses. In October 1902, the town began hiring regular police, and the following year a report confirmed that the town was offering special incentives to investors with capital. Specifics, however, were not given.¹² J. C. Robertson established, in 1902, the town's first bank, the Bank of Robersonville; however, within four years it was reorganized to increase capital stock. Its new board of directors included fourteen prominent businessmen from Everetts, Parmele, Palmyra, and Williamston, as well as the following leaders from Robersonville: J. H. Roberson Jr., A. S. Roberson, W. A. Roberson, J. W. Ferrell, R. A. Bailey, Dr. R. H. Hargrove, and J. C. Roberson.¹³ In 1905, a news account in the Williamston newspaper, *The Enterprise*, noted that "progress of the town is shown in its new brick buildings, its hotel, buggy business and graded schools, with the tobacco warehouses as

⁷ Butchko, *Martin Architectural Heritage*, 23-24.

⁸ 1900 U. S. Census, Martin County, N. C., Robersonville, Population Schedule.

⁹ 1900 U. S. Census, Martin County, N. C., Robersonville, Population Schedule.

¹⁰ "Opening of Robersonville's Graded Schools," *The Enterprise*, September 8, 1905.

¹¹ *The Enterprise*, March 14, 1901.

¹² "Local News," *The Enterprise*, April 10, 1901; "Robersonville," *The Enterprise*, October 10, 1902;

"Robersonville A Brief History of Its Past, Present and Future," *The Weekly News*, July 31, 1903.

¹³ "Bank of Robersonville," *The Enterprise*, April 13, 1906.

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business drawing cards. The tobacco market had done the work and the people are pushing the market.”¹⁴

The town’s upbeat economic growth of the early twentieth century fostered a residential and commercial building boom. In 1903, Robersonville’s *Weekly News* reported: “Residence realty is on the upward tendency and building fronts are rapidly enhancing in value. The highest price residence lots are at about \$200 per 40 ft. front and 125 ft. depth, but excellent property can be obtained in some of the best sections of the town at considerably less. Rent charges are moderate. Store rent along main street runs from \$8 to \$30 per month.”¹⁵ In all likelihood, local brick and lumber manufacturing plants provided essential building materials. Stylish turned and sawnwork millwork and ornamentation, however, were purchased from mills elsewhere, possibly Moss Planning Mill in nearby Washington, North Carolina, which manufactured columns, brackets, and mantels, as well as lumber.¹⁶ M. A. Roberson was operating a lumber mill in Robersonville during the late 1890s, and J. C. Andrews, in 1905, was a lumber dealer selling moldings, dressed lumber, and other products.¹⁷

Archibald Staton Roberson, a civic-minded local investor, real estate agent, land speculator, and merchant, made significant contributions to the growth of Robersonville. After having purchased Hardison’s Department Store in 1894, he and his two brothers, William Edwin Roberson (1859-1938) and Timothy Walton Roberson (1854-1947), established A. S. Roberson and Company as a general mercantile business. It grew into one of Robersonville’s leading businesses. Known as Arch, A. S. Roberson served as a town commissioner and treasurer. In 1903, the members of the board of commissioners, which included Roberson, were described as “wide awake thorough going business men, deeply interested in every object tending to improvement and prosperity of the town. Their popularity is great and their friends legion. Their official actions are conservative and progressive. They are Democrats of unswerving faith and fidelity.” At this time, Roberson was also considered one of the principal real estate owners in the town and county, as well as a leading financier of both. He also served as a county commissioner in 1909-1910. In 1923, he took on a new role as the clerk and tax collector for the town’s board of commissioners, a position he held until 1940.

¹⁴ “Opening of Robersonville’s Graded Schools,” *The Enterprise*, September 8, 1905.

¹⁵ “Robersonville A Brief History of Its Past, Present and Future,” *The Weekly News*, July 31, 1903.

¹⁶ *North Carolina Labor Statistic*, 1911, 233.

¹⁷ Butchko, *Martin Architectural Heritage*, 106; *NC Yearbook*, 1905, 380; 1910 U. S. Census, Town of Robersonville.

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As Robersonville developed during the early twentieth century, Outterbridge Street linked the Robersonville High School two blocks north with the home of Martin County's leading educator and Robersonville's leading teacher, Stephen W. Outterbridge (1894-1915), who retired in 1901. This street was formerly an old county road and an original dividing line between the property owned by two of the town's founders and brothers, George O. and Henry D. Roberson.¹⁸ Their first cousin, Archibald S. Roberson purchased on April 10, 1900, for \$375, the two adjoining lots just northwest of Outterbridge's home. Later, on April 10, 1905, he extended the property at the rear with another purchase, bringing its total acreage to approximately two-and-a-sixteenth acres.¹⁹ In all likelihood, Roberson had the picturesque Queen Anne-style cottage constructed soon after the initial purchase. At this time, Robersonville was poised for new growth, with the opening there of the county's first tobacco market on August 7, 1900. Two years later, the Robersonville High School opened on September 8, 1902.²⁰

Whether or not Roberson built the dwelling to be his home, a speculative property, or a rental property intended for the school principal is uncertain. In 1900, the U. S. census appears to indicate that the Roberson family lived on "Rail Road Street." Two years later, *The Enterprise* reported on October 3, 1902, that "Arch Roberson and Jesse Rawls are erecting two handsome residences on Railroad Street." In the 1910 U. S. census, Roberson was residing on Railroad Street, and in all probability, it is the same expansive two-story house in which he lived until his death in 1955.

Robersonville's housing market figures nearly doubled between 1900 and 1910, expanding from sixty-three households to one-hundred twenty-three. In contrast, the percentage of rental properties in the town decreased only marginally, from nearly fifty-nine percent to fifty-three percent. This robust economy continued to provide opportunities in the building trades, as well as investment and speculation in the housing market. Between 1900 and 1910, the number of house carpenters living in town had doubled to ten. Rufus Licircus "Kirk" Roberson (1857-1914) and David Franklin Roberson (1847-1935), both of whom were house carpenters and older brothers of Archibald S. Roberson, were living in the town respectively by 1900 and 1910. Another brother, William Edwin Roberson (1859-1938) was president of a lumber mill and a well-known carpenter. The number of Robersonville residents in other building trades had

¹⁸ Hughes, *Martin County Heritage*, 509.

¹⁹ Original deeds in possession of Nancy Barnhill Aycok, recorded in Martin County Deed Book C-3, 244 and O-3, 89.

²⁰ Butchko, *Martin Architectural Heritage*, 304; "Robersonville High School" ad, *The Enterprise*, September 5, 1902.

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increased also by 1910, and included two house painters, a roof painter, two brick masons, and a roof tinner.²¹

Education was the third catalyst in the growth of the Town of Robersonville. Although county schooling was available, an academy was opened in Robersonville in 1885, with Prof. Stephen W. Outterbridge, a highly esteemed educator in Martin County, as headmaster. Following Prof. Outterbridge's retirement in 1901, citizens sought to establish a public high school that included primary grades.²² The Robersonville High School opened on September 8, 1902, for white students in a fully furnished and impressive new two-story frame schoolhouse that featured a central bell tower and recessed entry. It was located on the north side of Academy Street at its intersection with Outterbridge Street, near the Robersonville Primitive Baptist Church (NR 2005). C. H. McLaurin served as principal. Fees ranged from one to three dollars per student.²³ Initially, fifty-five students were enrolled in seven grades, with Leyta Carter teaching the three primary grades and McLaurin the four upper grades. Music instruction was also provided. Boarding with private families was an option made available for students.²⁴ In 1902, three girls from Everetts and a boy from Paramele boarded in the home of Archibald S. Roberson.²⁵ At this time Robersonville also had a separate school for African American students but little is known about it.

Like several towns across North Carolina in 1905, Robersonville embarked on a new educational direction with the passage by the North Carolina legislature of a bill sponsored by Martin County's Senator Henry W. Stubbs.²⁶ On May 2, 1905, in a closely contested election, a chartered special school was approved and welcomed with the peeling of church bells. J. C. Smith and J. L. Ross worked actively for its establishment and supporters saw good schooling as an opportunity for advancement and the "way to make our people great."²⁷ A native of the Robersonville area and a highly respected educator, John D. Everett (1869-1953) accepted the appointment to serve as the first superintendent of Robersonville's Graded Schools. On September 4, 1905, this new system opened in the former Robersonville High School with about 180 children and five teachers, including Prof. Everett and his bride, Lee Ellen Thornton. The

²¹ U. S. Census 1900 and 1910, Martin County, N. C., Robersonville, Population Schedules; Hughes, *Martin County Heritage*, 526-527, 507; "David F. Roberson died Last Friday," *Weekly Herald*, December 18, 1935

²² "Prof. S. W. Outterbridge. Brief Biographical Sketch of His Life," *The Enterprise*, December 15, 1905.

²³ "Robersonville High School" ad, *The Enterprise*, September 5, 1902.

²⁴ "Robersonville High School," *The Enterprise*, September 1, 1902.

²⁵ Smith, *History of Robersonville Public Schools, 1878-1959*, 22.

²⁶ "Local News," *The Enterprise*, February 17, 1905.

²⁷ "Robersonville Items," *The Enterprise*, May 5, 1905; "Local News," *The Enterprise*, February 17, 1905.

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Everetts were both graduates of the George Peabody College for Teachers in Nashville, Tennessee.²⁸

A former student of Prof. Outterbridge, Everett had strong family, religious, and educational roots in the community, having grown up on a farm not far from Robersonville, attended public school, and worshiped with the Missionary Baptists. Through the years, Everett had become an experienced educator, having taught in Collinsville, Alabama, and served as head of Bethel School in Pitt County.²⁹ His return in 1905 was viewed as a blessing for the community's new school system as well as a challenge and opportunity.³⁰ Over the next five years, he and his wife also formed a book club for young people and actively took part in a community-wide birthday celebration for Prof. Outterbridge on January 23, 1906.³¹ One year later, Archibald S. Roberson sold the house on Outterbridge Street, next door to the professor, to the Everetts for \$2,250.³² In 1908, a "Robersonville News Items" column written by Everett regularly appeared in *The Enterprise*.

When Everett accepted a position with the Rocky Mount school system in the summer of 1909, the Robersonville High School entered a period of transition. For two years the school was led by new principals, Barney W. Allen in 1909-1910, and J. D. Eason Jr. in 1910-1911. The 1910 census appears to indicate that Prof. Outterbridge's new neighbor was Barney W. Allen, the town's new school principal and teacher. In all likelihood, following his move to Rocky Mount, Everett had decided to rent his Robersonville property to Allen.³³ For the next six school terms beginning in 1911, W. H. Mizell took over its leadership and then added first the tenth and then eleventh grades. The Robersonville schools remained independent of the county schools until October 5, 1926, when the Board of Trustees of the Robersonville Graded Schools adopted a petition to unite with the Martin County System of Public Schools.³⁴

²⁸ "Opening of Robersonville Graded Schools Monday Sept. 4 1905," *The Enterprise*, September 8, 1905; Hughes, *Martin County Heritage*, 177.

²⁹ Hughes, *Martin County Heritage*, 177-178.

³⁰ "Robersonville's Superintendent," *The Enterprise*, June 9, 1905; "Address of Prof. Outterbridge," *The Enterprise*, February 9, 1906.

³¹ *The Enterprise*, December 15, 1905, February 2, 1906.

³² Original deed in possession of Nancy Barnhill Aycok, recorded in Martin County Deed Book S-3, 102.

³³ Smith, *History of Robersonville Public Schools*, 23; *NC Yearbook*, 1910, 306; 1911, 313. Note: Name variations for Allen included B. G. (N.C. Yearbook), Barney W. (U. S. Census), and W. C. (Smith); however, B. W. was confirmed in the *Biennial Report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction of North Carolina ...for the Scholastic Years 1908-1909 and 1909-1910*, Table 1 High School 1909-1910, 75.

³⁴ Minutes of the Board of Trustees of the Robersonville Graded School, June 1, 1923-November 22, 1954.

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Town and neighboring county residents alike viewed the Robersonville High School as a community asset. In some cases, farm families literally chose to move into town specifically to provide a better education for their children. The James A. Roebuck Sr. family made this decision to move to Robersonville and purchased a house within two blocks of the school.³⁵ A successful farmer, who owned extensive farms in the Cross Roads Township area, James Albert Roebuck Sr. (1859-1922) had a large family with children from two marriages. His first marriage to Elizabeth Mathews Wynne in 1882 ended with her death in 1895. Soon thereafter he married Amanda Magnolia Leggett (1876-1944), who gave birth to nine more children, four sons and five daughters.³⁶ On November 1, 1913, the Roebucks bought the Everett's' former home on Outterbridge Street for \$2,500.³⁷ How quickly the family moved into Robersonville is uncertain, but at this time, it included at least five school age children. The children from Roebuck's first marriage were now adults, and some were farming the family farms in Martin County.

Following Roebuck's death on January 28, 1921, his widow, Amanda Magnolia Leggett Roebuck, continued to live in the house on Outterbridge Street until her death on April 23, 1944. Their daughter, Marjorie Everett Roebuck Bissinger (1912-1991), who lived with her mother, continued to reside in the house until the heirs divided the estate in 1946. She was deeded the family home at 105 South Outterbridge Street and three years later married J. E. Barnhill (1907-1962). Together they raised their family here, updating the house first with a carport addition ca. 1950 and then again in the late 1950s—work performed by local carpenter James Jenkins.

World War II radically altered the lives of most American families. For the Roebuck family, the delayed settlement of the Amanda Leggett Roebuck's estate in 1946 was just one example of the war's impact. In this settlement, a long, narrow lot was carved from the home-place property to the south of the main dwelling and deeded to her youngest son, James A. Roebuck Jr. (1914-2002), a returning veteran of the war. Following the bombing of Pearl Harbor, he had married, in 1942, his hometown sweetheart, Doris J. Everett, and joined the U. S. Air Force. Having received his basic training in Biloxi, Mississippi, he served States-side for the remainder of the war, stationed first in Topeka, Kansas, and then in Colorado Springs. In December 1945, following the war's end, he and his wife returned to Robersonville and lived with his sister Marjorie in the Roebuck family home. As they developed plans to build their own home, timber was selected and harvested from a nearby family farm. On July 16, 1946, he received the deed for the newly defined neighboring lot, and Martin County contractor James C. "Jimmy" Gurkin (1886-1977) was hired to build the modest gable-front dwelling, which was completed by the

³⁵ Interview with Nancy Barnhill Aycock, Robersonville, NC on April 11, 2008.

³⁶ U. S. Census 1910, Martin County, N. C., Population Schedule; Hughes, *Martin County Heritage*, 316, 543.

³⁷ Original deed in possession of Nancy Barnhill Aycock, recorded in Martin County Deed Book E-1, 251.

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following year.³⁸ An automobile salesman for Dixie Motor Company in Williamston, Roebuck and his family, which grew to include two children, lived here until January 1962.³⁹ Following the death of J. H. Barnhill in 1962, the Roebuck family remained a close-knit family. James Roebuck built a larger brick dwelling on the opposing north side of the Roebuck homeplace, and the family moved from the smaller frame house to the new brick one. Doris Everett Roebuck continues to live in the brick house today. In recent years, through inheritance and purchase, a granddaughter of James Albert Roebuck Sr., Nancy Barnhill Aycock, acquired most of the property originally associated with the Roberson-Everett-Roebuck House, to insure the preservation of the family home place, which now includes both dwellings.

Architecture Context

Architecturally, the local significance of the Roberson-Everett-Roebuck House emerges from national building trends that evolved during the Victorian period representing academically distinctive styles, such as the Italianate, Gothic, Stick, Shingle, and Queen Anne. In North Carolina, many of these styles gained in popularity during the late nineteenth century and were fueled by new technologies capable of mass producing lumber and millwork. These picturesque and ornately decorated dwellings gained acceptance in rural eastern North Carolina and its developing small towns in the 1880s and 1890s. In Martin County, oftentimes, traditional dwellings were simply highlighted with decorative sawn and turned millwork. An interest in the Queen Anne-style, with its asymmetry, tall hipped roofs, projecting gables, and towers, however, lagged and appeared about the turn of the twentieth century, especially in towns. Typically, ornate sawn and turned millwork such as spindle friezes, brackets, and gable ornaments highlighted both the exterior and interior of a Queen Anne-style dwelling. Decoratively patterned wall surfaces were also created using diagonally-placed narrow beaded tongue-and-groove. All of these decorative devices were employed in the construction of the Roberson-Everett-Roebuck House, making it the most outstanding Queen Anne-style dwelling in Martin County.

In Robersonville, residences constructed throughout the first half of the twentieth century exhibit examples of nationally popular styles that shift from the Late Victorian styles into late nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century revivals and American movements. Here late Victorian styles more typically extended from the Gothic Revival to Queen Anne styles with surviving examples having construction dates ranging from as early as 1885 to 1915. Gothic

³⁸ Interview with Doris Everett Roebuck and Nancy Barnhill Aycock, May 6, 2010.

³⁹ Telephone interview with Nancy Barnhill Aycock, February 10, 2010; original deeds in possession of Nancy Barnhill Aycock, recorded in Martin County Deed Book U-5, 296-299 and 300-302.

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Revival-style cottages were particularly popular during the late nineteenth century, beginning in the 1880s. This style was a decorative precursor to the Queen Anne style, and these dwellings usually exhibited deeply pitched gable roofs and distinctive combinations of sawn and turned woodwork elements, such as gable ornaments, cornice brackets, turned porch posts.

The other late Victorian style, the Queen Anne style, does not appear to have emerged in Robersonville until about 1900 with the construction of two outstanding examples, the Robert A. Bailey House (ca. 1900) and the Roberson-Everett-Roebuck House (ca. 1900). The one-story Bailey house, however, combines the popular massing of the older Gothic Revival-style cottages and their cross gables with the introduction of a corner octagonal porch pavilion. On the other hand, the one-and-a-half-story Roberson-Everett-Roebuck House, built ca. 1900 for Archibald S. Roberson, stands as a fully conceived Queen Anne-style dwelling with a tall hip-roof, gable-front projections, and a central tower. Both it and the Bailey house are highly decorated with sawn and turned features, such as gable ornaments, cornice brackets, and porches with turned posts and balustrades. The Roberson-Everett-Roebuck House also has a fully elaborated spindle frieze very similar in detail to the one at the Timothy W. Roberson House, a Gothic Revival-style cottage built ca. 1902 for Roberson's older brother Timothy. The sawnwork edging with drop pendants of these friezes is also replicated on the porch of the Robert A. Bailey House. A melding of the Bailey and Roberson houses is exemplified by the Robert L. Smith House (1903), a two-story dwelling with deep hip roof, gable-front projection, and a wraparound porch that encircles a three-story corner tower. Other more restrained two-story variations of the Queen Anne style are the Dr. Robert H. Hargrove House (ca. 1911, remodeling), and the Dr. Vernon Ward House (1914). These dwellings exhibit more angular massing as opposed to the early curvilinear lines of the Queen Anne style and Colonial Revival-style finish.

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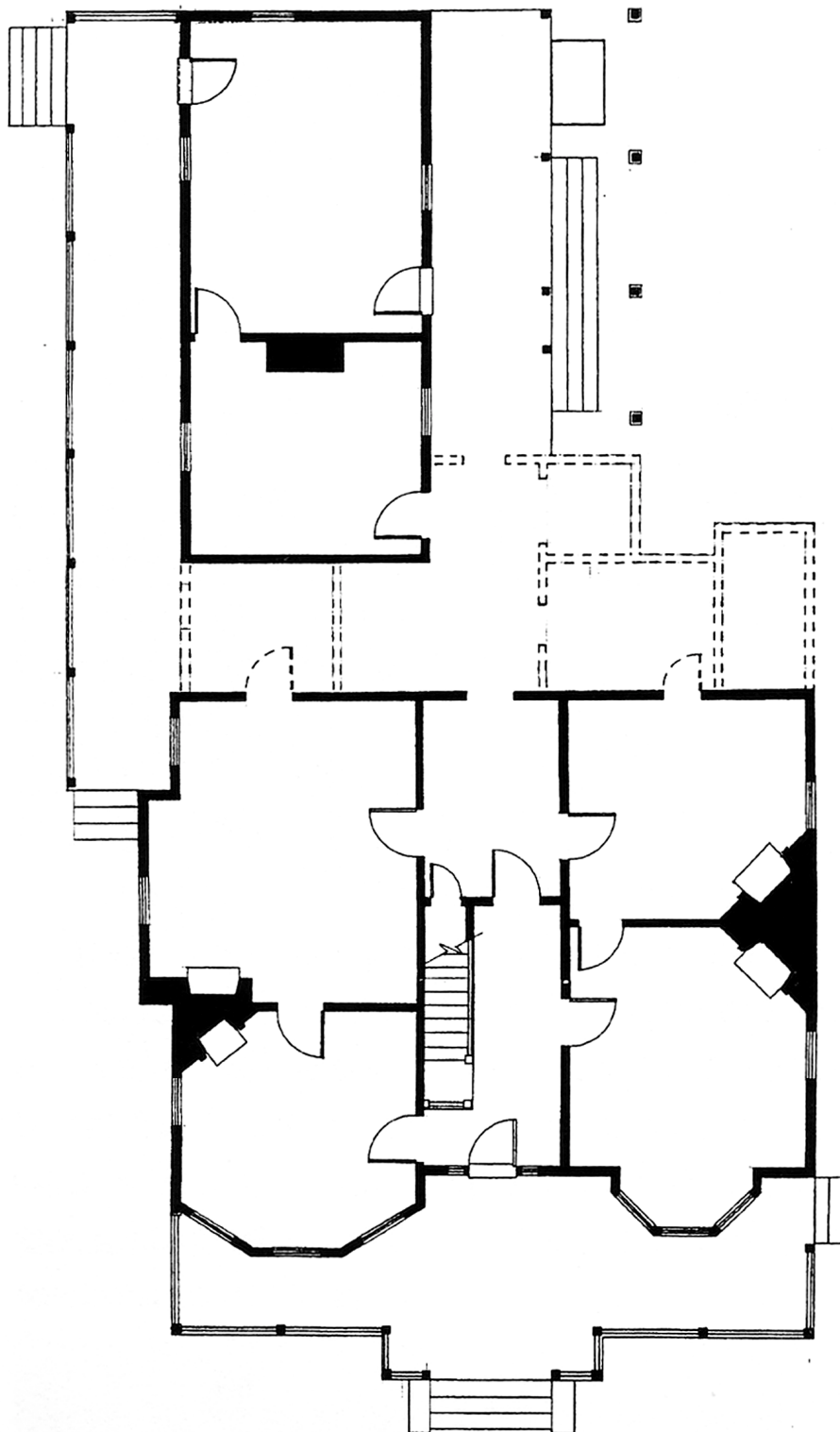
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Roberson-Everett-Roeback House, ca. 1915
105 South Outterbridge Street, Robersonville, Beaufort County, North Carolina





Roberson-Everett-Roeback House, First Floor Plan

105 South Outterbridge Street, Robersonville, Beaufort County, North Carolina

Drawing by Robin and Jay Walton in Thomas R. Butchko, *Martin Architectural Heritage*, 71.